THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL) (a) and (b) The growth trend for the recent years appears to indicate the beginning of a new cyclical upswing in the economy from 2003-04. The increased growth momentum of the manufacturing and services sectors along with a robust agricultural performance are expected to generate an overall GDP growth of 8-8.5 percent in the coming year.

(c) to (e) The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been discussing the creation of a weighted index of Asian currencies called in Asian Currency Unit (ACU), the proposal involves having a common currency for the countries under Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) with inclusion of India, Australia and New Zealand at a later date. The proposal is under preliminary discussion in the ADB.

Extension of gratuity, family pension in new pension system

112. DR. VIJAY MALLYA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to extend benefits of gratuity, family pension and death-cum-retirement gratuity in the new pension system;

(b) whether such a move goes against the earlier objective of the scheme and will dilute the new pension scheme; and

(c) what is the justification for this afterthought particularly when the new pension scheme as envisaged earlier would have freed Government from huge pension liabilities for its staff?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) There is no such proposal under consideration of Government.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of reply to part (a) above.

Dearness Allowance due to employees

113. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the extent to which additional Dearness Allowance and relief has become due to the Central Government employees and pensioners *w.e.f.* 1st July, 2006; and

(b) its financial impact on the national exchequer for the current year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) Dearness Allowance (DA)/ Dearness Relief (DR) to Central Government Employees/Pensioners is revised twice a year from 1st January and 1st July and normally payable with salary for the months of March and September respectively. The revised amount of DA/DR will be notified in due course.

Loan for handloom weavers

114. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal for extending the low interest loan facility to handloom weavers as was done for farmers; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) It has been decided that Ministry of Finance in consultation with Ministry of Textiles and other stake holders shall discuss the problems relating to credit to the handloom weavers. No decision has been taken as of now.

Settlement of crop insurance claims

115. SHRI MULE VENKATA MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Insurance Companies consider threshold yield as bench mark for settling claims of groundnut and paddy crops;

(b) if so, what is the procedure adopted for arriving threshold yield of groundnut and paddy crops;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the procedure adopted for settling the crop insurance claim is detrimental to the farmers; and

(d) if so, whether there is any proposal to review and revive the procedure adopted for settling crop insurance claims?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) Yes, Sir.